



Press Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Operation Santa Claus 2013 takes flight

CAMP DENALI, Alaska — Local community volunteers with Operation Santa Claus will travel to three remote villages this year to spread Christmas cheer: Kake, Nov. 14; St. George Island, Nov. 26; and Kwethluk, Dec. 11.

Hundreds of children living in the three Alaskan villages will benefit from generosity and hospitality during 57th annual Operation Santa Claus celebrations. This event is part of the Alaska National Guard's yearly community relations and support program that provides toys, clothing, books, school supplies, fresh fruit and sundaes to youngsters in communities across the state.

Santa, Mrs. Claus and a team of elves will travel on a variety of Santa's sleighs—Alaska Air National Guard C-130 Hercules and C-17 Globemaster III, and an Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN... The Alaska Air National Guard started Operation Santa Claus in 1956 in response to St. Mary's Mission's request for toys to give their children. Spring floods denied a fishing season that year, and the drought that followed all but eliminated big game animals available to hunt. Every bit of money the mission had was used to pay for food to be shipped in, so there was no money to buy children's Christmas gifts that year.

Guardsmen accepted new or used toys, in those days, from members of the Anchorage community. In turn, they'd rehab used toys, then hand them over to Santa Claus for delivery aboard an Air Guard C-123J Provider.

Throughout the years, as time and social conditions in rural Alaska changed, other villages, schools and groups have invited Operation Santa Claus to their communities. Literally, tens of thousands of Alaska's children and adults have been on the receiving end of St. Nick's good cheer.

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NOV. 26 MEDIA INVITATION for St. George Island trip: Please contact the Alaska National Guard Public Affairs Office at (907)428-6031. Arrangements must be made by 11am Monday, November 25th. (Trip length is approximately 6am to 6pm. Final details will be provided to confirmed media attendees.)